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## THE STATUS OF THE CLASSICS IN THE SOUTH<sup>1</sup>

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According to the statistics of the National Bureau of Education, the number of secondary students in the public and private high schools and academies studying Latin in 1904-5 was greater than that pursuing any other single subject except algebra. In that year 56.43 per cent. of secondary students in these schools studied algebra; 49.69 per cent. studied Latin. That is, of 786,909 secondary students, 444,092 were enrolled in algebra classes, and 391,067 were getting more or less discipline from the study of Latin. The classes that enrolled the next largest numbers of students were those in English literature 48.14 per cent., rhetoric 47.3 per cent., and history (other than American) 40.5 per cent.

In 1889-90, 100,152 young people in these secondary schools of the United States studied Latin. This was 33.62 per cent. of the total enrolment of secondary students for that year. This number in 1904-5 had increased absolutely to 391,067, and relatively to 49.69 per cent. of the total enrolment, a gain in 15 years of 16.07 per cent. This gain was 2.41 per cent. greater than the percentage of gain in students studying algebra. In the eleven years preceding and including 1904-5, the subjects which showed the greatest gains in percentage of students are:

	Percentage in 1894-95	Percentage in 1904-5	Percentage of Gain in Eleven Years
Rhetoric.....	31.31	47.30	15.99
English Literature (statistics 1897-98) ....	38.9	48.14	9.24
German.....	12.58	20.34	7.76
Latin.....	43.76	49.69	5.93
History (other than American).....	34.65	40.5	5.85
Algebra.....	52.4	56.43	4.03

<sup>1</sup> Read before the Classical Association of the Middle West and South, New Orleans, 1909.

It should be stated that the high-water mark in the proportionate number of secondary students was reached for Latin in the year 1898-99, when 50.29 per cent. of the total enrolment studied Latin. Latin therefore lost ground relatively by  $\frac{3}{8}$  of 1 per cent. between 1898-99 and 1904-5; whereas the other subjects mentioned showed a gradual increase in percentage of students, with the exception of algebra, which in this period gained approximately only  $\frac{1}{8}$  of 1 per cent.

It must be noted that in 1905, Latin had a stronger hold on the public secondary schools than it did on the private schools and academies of secondary grade. In the former, 50.21 per cent. of all secondary students studied Latin; in the latter, 46.47 per cent. of the total number took Latin. The case, however, was the reverse with Greek. In 1904-5, 6.67 per cent. of secondary students in private schools were enrolled in Greek classes, whereas only 1.47 per cent. of secondary students in the public high schools enjoyed the privilege of studying Greek. Of the total number of secondary students in the public and private high schools and academies in 1904-5, only 2.18 per cent. took Greek, a proportion less than half as great as it had been ten years before, when it was 4.73 per cent. Greek, however, was not the only subject in the curriculum of secondary schools that relatively lost ground in number of students. The sciences, astronomy, physics, chemistry, physical geography, geology, and physiology, lost ground relatively from 1.29 per cent. in the case of physical geography to 6.49 per cent., in the case of physics. Trigonometry, psychology, and even civics, show relative losses of 1.06 per cent., 1.51 per cent., and 3.56 per cent., respectively. These figures would seem to indicate a gradual simplification of the normal secondary-school curriculum in the United States to English, history, Latin, mathematics, the modern languages, and a minimum of science.

While the relative number of secondary students in Latin in the public and private high schools and academies of the whole United States dropped from 49.97 per cent. to 49.69 per cent. of the total enrolment of such students, i. e.,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1 per cent., between 1900 and 1905, in the twelve southern states other than Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, West Virginia, Missouri, and Oklahoma, the percentage of secondary students in Latin rose from 53.87 to 58.55

of the total enrolment in public and private high schools and academies, a gain of 4.68 per cent. So that it may be seen at once that Latin is more popular in the secondary schools of the South than in the same schools in the other sections of the Union. In the South, as in the United States as a whole, Latin has a stronger hold on the public high school than it has on the private secondary school. In the public high schools 63.46 per cent. of all the students of secondary grade study Latin. In the private secondary schools the figure is 46.5 per cent.

I have no definite data to determine whether the percentage of students in Latin in the public high schools of these twelve southern states has diminished since 1905. From only five state superintendents of public instruction could I secure information on this point. The superintendents of Louisiana and Florida report an increasing percentage taking Latin. In South Carolina, the superintendent informs me, the percentage of students in Latin "is certainly not diminishing." Arkansas reports a falling-off in Latin, as compared with the total enrolment. Superintendent Cook assigns as a reason: "A better adaptation of the high-school course to the needs of pupils who expect to enter active life after leaving the high school." In North Carolina, the report of the state high-school inspector for June, 1908, gives definite figures showing that 74.28 per cent. of high-school students are taking Latin. This is a decrease of 5.8 per cent. from the figures shown by the United States Commissioner's report for 1905. But Latin still claims the attention of the largest number of students of all the subjects taught in the high schools of the "Old North State." And it must be remembered that the state high-school inspector's report for 1908 shows more than twice as large a total enrolment as that shown by the United States Commissioner's report for 1905.

Eight high schools in as many leading cities in the South, to-wit: Birmingham, Little Rock, New Orleans (McDonough High School No. 1), Louisville (Girls' High School), Nashville, Memphis, Dallas, and Richmond, report for 1907-8 a combined total enrolment of 5,423 students, and 3,103, or 57.22 per cent., taking Latin; for 1908-9, a combined total enrolment of 5,485, with 3,086, 56.26 per cent., taking Latin, a decrease of nearly 1 per cent. in one year. Of

these high schools for last year, that at Birmingham, one of our great industrial centers, shows the largest percentage of high-school students enrolled in Latin classes—557 out of a total enrolment of 728, or 76.5 per cent. Richmond comes next with 714 out of 950, or 75.2 per cent. studying Latin. At Richmond, four years of Latin, in all courses, are required for graduation from the high school. In the Birmingham, Louisville, and Atlanta high schools, four years of Latin are required in two of the several courses offered. In the Memphis and Dallas high schools, two years of Latin is the minimum requirement in each of the several courses. In the New Orleans and Little Rock high schools, Latin is entirely elective, except that at Little Rock, if Latin is taken at all, it must be taken for two years. When it is considered that Latin is entirely elective in the McDonough High School No. 1 in New Orleans, and practically elective in the Little Rock High School, the showing in Latin made by these two schools is creditable. In each, over half of the student body study Latin.

The principals of the high schools in Birmingham, Louisville, and Richmond note a change of attitude on the part of their constituency unfavorable to Latin, due, respectively, to “commercialism,” “desire for industrial education,” and a “tendency to substitute German for Latin” on the ground that German is “easier” and “more practical.” In four large city high schools in New Orleans, Dallas, Nashville (“where a healthy condition exists”), and Atlanta, no change of attitude toward Latin is noted. Two high schools in Little Rock and Memphis report more students taking Latin, due in the first case to a change in the requirements, whereby no credit is given except for two years of Latin, and to the improved methods of instruction; and, in the second case, “to the well-founded opinion,” to quote the principal, “that Latin assists the reasoning faculty in all other branches.” To the question “Do you not think that Latin should continue to hold the place it does in our educational system?” six of the eight principals of the high schools before mentioned answer “Yes” without reservation. Two, the principals of the Fogg High School, Nashville, and of the Richmond High School, think that Latin should not be required for graduation from the high school or from college.

In the private schools within this territory, we find from the United States Commissioner's report for 1904-5, that 46.5 per cent. of the total enrolment of secondary students studied Latin, as compared with 63.46 per cent. in the public high schools. Between 1900 and 1905 there was a marked decrease in the total enrolment of secondary students in the private schools, and also a decrease in the actual number studying Latin. But the relative number of Latin students increased from 44.84 to 46.5 per cent.

The combined total enrolment of sixty representative preparatory and private schools in our group of states for 1907-8 was 10,425. Of this number, 3,577, or a little more than one-third (34.31 per cent.) studied Latin. The same schools for the first three months of the present scholastic year show a total enrolment of 8,733, with 3,237, or 37 per cent., studying Latin. This is a relative increase of nearly 3 per cent. If the number of students taking Latin in all or nearly all of the private secondary schools in this group of states in 1905 was  $46\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the total enrolment of secondary students, and if I find from the statements furnished me by the principals that in sixty schools the number taking Latin last year was only  $34\frac{1}{8}$  per cent. of the total enrolment, it must not be argued that the relative number of Latin students in southern private schools has decreased by over 12 per cent. in the last four years. For in the total enrolment of these sixty private schools are included many students below the secondary grade. Whereas, in the United States Commissioner's report, the number of Latin students is compared with the total number of *secondary* students only. In fact, Latin seems to be holding its own fairly well in the private schools.

Of these sixty schools, two require no Latin, two require two years of work in the subject, forty require four years, four demand five years, and one, if I may judge from its course of study, exacts six years. In all these schools, last year, 174 elected to study Latin beyond what was required of them in the course upon which they had entered. This year 233 have elected it in the same way.

The proportion of students in Latin to the total enrolment varies greatly in the different schools. The Webb School in Tennessee shows the largest percentage taking Latin; last year, 236 out of 238; this year 245 enrolled and all studying Latin. To paraphrase the

words Cicero puts in the mouth of Cato with reference to the household of Appius Claudius: *Viget in illō lūdō patrius mōs et disciplina*. Wallace's University School at Memphis, in Tennessee; Marion Institute in Alabama; and Cluster Springs Academy in Virginia, each has 80 per cent. or more of its students in Latin classes. But another school in Tennessee with 357 students has less than 10 per cent. of them studying Latin. A seminary for girls in Virginia is a close second for the booby prize.

To the question "Do you notice any change in the attitude of your constituency toward the classics (particularly Latin)?" five principals return no answer, twenty-four report no change, sixteen note a decrease of interest in the subject, while fifteen observe an increase of interest.

In our twelve states Greek is disappearing from both public and private high schools and academies. The absolute number studying it in these schools in 1900 was 3,249; for 1905, it was 2,409. That is, of all the secondary students in these schools for 1900, 3.48 per cent. took Greek; for 1905, only 2.39 per cent. took it. The private schools made a little better showing. In 1900, 5.76 per cent. studied Greek; in 1905, 4.97 per cent. But Greek is still offered as an elective in nearly all the public high schools of Mississippi, and in a few high schools of the other states, except Virginia, Arkansas, and possibly Texas. Of nine city high schools in the South, all except Birmingham and New Orleans report no students in Greek. Birmingham had ten last year, and the McDonough High School No. 1 in New Orleans had three studying Greek. The enterprising head of the Latin Department at Little Rock hopes to have a class in Greek next year, if five ambitious youths in that city can be found to insist upon its being taught. *Quod bonum faustum felixque sit*. In 1907-8 of 60 private secondary schools, 31 taught Greek to a Spartan band of 303 out of a total enrolment of 10,425. This year 27 of these same schools are teaching Greek to only 230 pupils in a total enrolment of 8,733.

#### LATIN AND GREEK IN THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In 55 representative colleges and universities the statistics of Latin and Greek for the year 1900-1, 1904-5, 1907-8 are as follows:

	Enrolment in College of Liberal Arts	In Latin	Percentage in Latin	In Greek	Percentage in Greek
1900-1.....	10,295	4,011	38.96	1,790	17.38
1904-5.....	11,679	4,242	36.23	1,583	13.55
1907-8.....	15,010	5,377	35.82	1,653	11.01

These figures speak for themselves. While they show an absolute increase in the number taking Latin, they also show a substantial relative decrease of 3.14 per cent. when compared with the total enrolment. In Greek the numbers decreased both absolutely and relatively. The figures of the loss are 137 and 6.37 per cent. The statistics of 102 colleges and universities for 1907-8 and the first three months of 1908-9 are as follows:

	Total Number Enrolled	Number in Latin	Percentage in Latin	Number in Greek	Percentage in Greek
1907-8.....	25,641	8,607	33.18	2,395	9.34
1908-9.....	25,342	9,373	36.99	2,384	9.60

These latter figures afford a slight consolation to a devout classicist. But it must be remembered that the total enrolment of 1908-9 is not yet complete. And while the relative number of Latin students has increased 3.81 per cent. and that of Greek  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1 per cent., I fear that the percentages at the end of this year will be no larger than they were last.

As was to be expected, the private and church foundations show a larger percentage of students in Latin and Greek than do the state universities. Lander College, an institution for young women in South Carolina, reports the largest percentage of students in Latin, where all of the 160 study it. Salem College and Academy (for young women) in North Carolina, reports 270 out of 435 students in Latin and 45 in Greek. The University of North Carolina has this year the largest Latin department of some 110 institutions from which I have heard, 276 college students in Latin. Davidson College, North Carolina, has the largest number of students in Greek, 116 last year and 114 this year. Spring Hill College, in Alabama, is also noteworthy for the number of students in Greek, 112 out of 230. Fifty-five girls in the Young Harris College in Georgia have undertaken to demonstrate that southern girls can learn Greek as well as their



northern sisters. The prejudice against Greek for girls in this section is of a piece with the fond delusion that one southern girl out of every two may, by a few years' study of music, become an accomplished pianist. Of 105 colleges, 25 last year and 26 this year had no students in Greek. In 23 Greek seems to have entirely disappeared, if indeed it ever existed in some of them. Of these 23 colleges, all, if I mistake not, grant the A.B. degree save the Virginia Military Institute. All are for women except the school just named and the North Georgia Agricultural College. Two of the 23 bear the imposing title of "University for Women."

Sixteen of these 105 colleges require four years of Latin; 31 require three years; 30, two years; 10, one year; and 12 demand no Latin at all for admission to their first college class in the subject. The important universities of Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Washington and Lee, will grant the A.B. degree to students who have never studied Latin or Greek. So do Trinity College, North Carolina, and Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville. The Faculty of the University of Virginia, a *clarum et venerabile nomen* for classical study in the South, proposed last year to make Latin entirely optional for the degrees of A.B. and A.M. The Board of Visitors rejected the proposal. Vanderbilt, the University of the South, the University of Mississippi, Central University, Davidson College, Kentucky Wesleyan, Spring Hill, and other institutions, 26 in all, require both Greek and Latin for the A.B. degree. Seventy-two out of 105 require one of the ancient languages for this degree. The following require Latin for B.S. also: Vanderbilt, North Georgia Agricultural, Bethel, Meridian Male, Hampden-Sydney, University of Alabama, Central University, Wesleyan, and Wake Forest, nine in all.<sup>1</sup>

In these 105 colleges 963 students elected Latin last year beyond what was required of them in the course upon which they had entered. The figure for this year is 979. Those electing Greek last year numbered 523 as compared with 578 for this year.

To the question "Do you notice any change in the attitude of your constituency toward the classics (particularly Latin)?" 50 out

<sup>1</sup> A great majority of the graduates of Emory College, Georgia, still receive the degree of A.B., for which both Greek and Latin are required.

of 105 institutions report no change; 25 observe an increase of interest; 24 note that interest in the classics is diminishing; and 6 return the question unanswered.

In the majority of cases, my questionnaire, addressed to the presidents of colleges and universities, was turned over to the heads of the classical departments for answer. But 47 college presidents affixed their signatures to the answers returned to me. The question "Do you think that Latin should continue to hold the place it does in our educational system?" only 3 of these 47 presidents answer in the negative. One of these, the president of a college of the highest standing in Virginia, writes: "Not unless it (Latin) ceases to be taught as at present. It should be begun before the high school is reached and studied long enough for the student to get some real hold on the language, or the modern languages should be allowed to substitute it out of the curriculum." Forty-four of these 47 college presidents give an affirmative answer to my question, and many are emphatic in their approval of Latin. Significantly, among those who answer the question affirmatively, are Superintendent Nichols of the Virginia Military Institute, Presidents Winston, of the North Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical College, and Glenn, of the North Georgia Agricultural College. The presidents of the state universities turned my questionnaire over to the *classical* faculties in their respective institutions. What their attitude generally is toward classical study, I cannot say.